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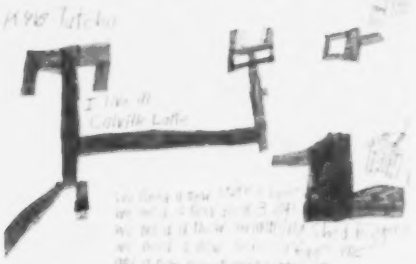
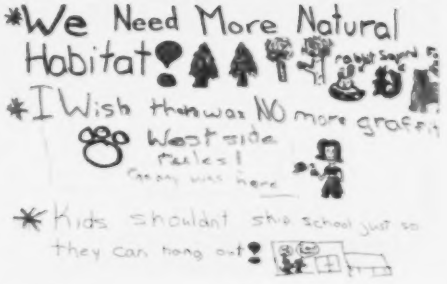
Social Agenda

A Draft for People of the NWT

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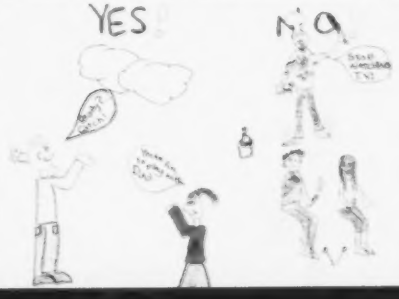

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Message From the Social Agenda Working Group

The Draft Social Agenda Report is the joint effort of a group of people who want social conditions to improve in the NWT. We represent Aboriginal and public governments as well as the non-government service provider sector. We have experience working on social issues within and outside governments. All of us have faced barriers within the system that make progress difficult. We drew on other people's experience by looking at past reports, particularly the report of the Social Agenda Conference, held in June 2001, and by hearing presentations and holding community meetings.

We made a commitment to provide an action plan to improve the quality of life in the NWT. Our recommendations are aimed at improving the overall system. Within the system policy makers, leaders, governments, organizations and service providers make social policy decisions and deliver social programs. We developed this document as a group. We did research, had discussions and debates and heard from many people.

Our draft report explains and describes what a social agenda is and how we think people can use it. It includes a vision, mission statement, guiding principles and recommendations along with actions that say how to implement them. The Working Group also prepared two other documents. One is a living social program and service inventory. The other is a collection of recommendations from other reports that deal with specific social issues. We hope you find them useful.

We know that while many leaders and organizations chose us as their representatives, and we tried to get as much input as possible, we are just twenty people. So we present this to you as a draft document. The Working Group is asking all leaders to implement the draft social agenda. If you support the draft social agenda, we want you to ask your leaders for implementation. If you have different ideas, tell your leaders what they are soon so they can act quickly!

Many people were interested in our work, and we are grateful for their support. We thank individuals for their presentations, documents, informal discussions and phone calls. We appreciate the opportunity many groups gave us by inviting us to talk with them about the Social Agenda. Thank you also to all the leaders and organizations that nominated members for the Working Group and supported them to do this work. Some communities responded to our invitation and asked us to meet with them. We express our gratitude to them, too, for their interest and their thoughtful comments and input.

We hope that all individuals and organizations in the Northwest Territories will support the recommendations in this report and urge public and Aboriginal leaders to move forward with implementation.

Some changes will take time and a long-term commitment by everybody. These steps, combined with much excellent work already under way that deals with specific social issues, will help to make the NWT a better place for us all.

Sincerely,

The Social Agenda Working Group

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Unless otherwise referenced, all side-bar quotes are from the Social Agenda Conference participants, June 2001.

An Executive Summary of the Draft Social Agenda

Introduction

The Social Agenda is a vision and an action plan to improve the well-being of people in the NWT. It gives everyone a chance to better coordinate, integrate, and improve policies and programs to ensure people's well-being. The Social Agenda works to balance and connect social development with economic development.

A Working Group with 20 members from public governments, Aboriginal governments, and non-government organizations developed the Social Agenda. This is the first time a group representing so many sectors has used consensus to work together on a social development plan for the NWT.

The Social Agenda began with people across the NWT. Two hundred and fifty service providers and leaders participated in the two-day Social Agenda Conference on the Hay River Reserve in June 2001. They shared information about social issues and how to balance them with economic development. They talked a lot about the root causes of social problems and what to do about them.

The Working Group was formed after the Social Agenda Conference. The Working Group used the ideas from the conference, other reports, and community meetings to create the Social Agenda.

The Working Group believes the Social Agenda is possible and that action should be taken now. The Social Agenda is an investment in people. The Social Agenda is long-term and needs to be monitored, just as the environment and the economy are monitored. The Working Group invites and challenges public governments, Aboriginal governments, and other agencies to adopt and implement the Social Agenda.

The Vision

We want the NWT to be a place where we value people's individual gifts and support people's choices. It is a place where people have a safe healthy living environment, and a strong cultural and spiritual foundation. It is a place where we foster peoples' rights to determine their own future in balance with their responsibility to society.

The Mission Statement

We will work together so that the NWT can be a place where all people are healthy and live in safe and respectful communities, where people have support and live to their fullest potential.

The Guiding Principles

- Individuals, communities, governments, and non-government organizations all have responsibility to improve social conditions.
- Individuals, communities, governments, and non-government organizations need to work together to develop, implement, and support the Social Agenda.
- People are best served when governments, communities, and non-government organizations cooperate to address social issues.
- The Social Agenda is a foundation for economic development.
- The Social Agenda can complement and support self-government negotiations.
- All people and communities have value and deserve respect.
- People who deliver social programs deserve respect and support, such as professional development and good working conditions.

The Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Social Agenda as a Policy Framework

Public governments, Aboriginal governments, and non-government organizations should use the Social Agenda to develop and implement their social policies and programs.

How can we do this?

A. Develop a common checklist and use it to make decisions about programs, policies, action plans, strategies, and other initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Work Together

Public governments, Aboriginal governments, communities, and non-government organizations should create mechanisms that encourage them to work together.

How can we do this?

A. Make funding available in the 2003-2006 GNWT business plan to develop, implement, and maintain community or regional wellness plans and/or inter-agency committees.

B. Provide funding through a single source for wellness programs.

C. Initiate, support, and promote processes that build relationships such as the Intergovernmental Forum, Aboriginal Summit, Inuvik Interagency Committee, and the Yellowknife Social Planning Coalition.

D. Review and amend legislation and policies that prevent government and non-government organizations working together.

E. Use partnerships to develop and implement policies, strategies, action plans, and programs.

Recommendation 3:
Build Capacity – Multi-year Funding

The GNWT and federal government should provide multi-year funding starting in 2003-2004.

How can we do this?

A. Provide one-window multi-year funding to departments, boards, and non-government organizations.

B. Make the funding subject to financial and activity reports, annual financial audits, program evaluation, and budget appropriation.

Recommendation 4:
Build Capacity – Small Communities

The GNWT should establish a minimum service level for each community based on a needs assessment.

How can we do this?

A. Coordinate a needs assessment for the smallest communities, possibly through the Special Joint Committee on the Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs.

B. Fund a community resource worker for each small community.

C. Recognize and support the valuable contributions made by volunteers.

Recommendation 5:
Build Capacity – Research and Programs

Governments and non-government organizations should work together to conduct research in the NWT and to deliver more programs in the NWT.

How can we do this?

A. Encourage private industry to fund research.

B. Establish a Centre of Excellence for Social Research in the NWT.

C. Expand existing services to serve NWT people, rather than use southern services.

D. Use partnerships to develop and implement NWT pilot programs for people recently placed in southern treatment programs.

E. Explore opportunities to work together to train people and attract specialized workers.

F. Fund infrastructure and programs based on need, not on the number of people.

Recommendation 6: Monitor the Implementation of the Social Agenda

Public governments and Aboriginal governments should develop and use social indicators to measure social conditions and quality of life.

How can we do this?

A. A sub-committee of the Social Agenda Working Group will develop a set of indicators for the 2003-2004 business plan.

B. Establish a Social Agenda Implementation Council by fall, 2002. It should have members from public governments, Aboriginal governments and non-government organizations.

C. Take responsibility for the Social Agenda through the Intergovernmental Forum or by legislating the Implementation Council.

D. Make sure the Implementation Council has enough staff.

E. Maintain the Social Agenda Working Group until an Implementation Council is formed.

F. Evaluate the long-term effectiveness of programs.

Recommendation 7: Implement, Assess, Track, and Communicate Recommendations

All governments and non-government organizations should implement, assess, monitor, and report to the public the recommendations from other reports.

How can we do this?

A. Review, consider, and if possible implement existing recommendations before creating more.

B. Collect and make available by summer 2003 the information from past and current social policies, standards, research, information, action plans, studies, strategies and reports.

Recommendation 8:
Policies, Legislation, and Standards

All governments and non-government agencies should establish minimum policies, legislation, and/or standards for programs and services. These should protect the public, guide service providers, and ensure all people have access to adequate, respectful, and appropriate care.

How can we do this?

A. Review existing policies and standards.

B. Use established criteria to revise policies and standards, or to make new ones.

C. Prepare plain language summaries of legislation, policies, and standards.

Recommendation 9:
Leadership and Personal Responsibility

Every person, including leaders, should make a personal commitment to contribute to improving social conditions in the NWT. We should work together to better support our leaders.

How can we do this?

A. Make healthy lifestyle choices, do positive activities with children, participate in community activities, advocate for social issues, vote.

B. Speak about social issues, be a role model, do personal healing, mentor new leaders, encourage community plans.

C. Provide more resources to train leaders, broaden the definition of leadership, recognize people who improve social well-being.

Recommendation 10:
Prevention

All governments, non-government organizations, businesses, families and individuals should support initiatives that emphasize prevention.

How can we do this?

A. Make healthy lifestyle choices.

B. Invest more in prevention, without taking funding away from treatment.

C. Make prevention a key part of wellness plans.

D. Fund prevention programs. Work with partners to development and implement prevention programs.

E. Raise awareness that prevention is important.

Introduction

The Social Agenda began where it should – with the people. In June 2001, a two-day conference on the Hay River Reserve was held to kick-start the creation of a Social Agenda for the Northwest Territories (NWT). More than 250 people were at the conference.

The Social Agenda Conference brought service providers and government leaders together to share ideas and to balance the focus on economic issues with an equal focus on social issues. People had many thoughts about the causes of social problems in the NWT, and about how to deal with them.

"the current Legislative Assembly and the GNWT have focused on economic development so far in its mandate and the results are showing in all regions... It is time now to look at social issues" (Michael McLeod, MLA Deh Cho, welcoming participants to the Social Agenda Conference)

At the conference, people said that the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) should not drive a Social Agenda alone. So, public and Aboriginal governments as well as non-government organizations chose twenty members for a Working Group to take the next steps. The Social Agenda Working Group met for the first time in October 2001, and we have met each month since. We work by consensus.

"ensure that the process is not government driven"

"it can't be owned by the GNWT"

The Social Agenda is unique. For the first time, a group with members chosen by public and Aboriginal governments and non-government organizations worked together to create a social plan for the NWT. More information about what the Social Agenda Working Group did is in Appendix I.

Some people at the Social Agenda Conference said that society should deal with the impacts of colonization to help people become more independent. People talked about poor leadership, and past governments that did long-term damage to people. They said people should work on wellness, healing and making progress towards personal and community goals at the same time.

Others said empowerment would help people take care of themselves instead of relying on governments to help them. People said that supporting the human rights of every individual in the Northwest Territories is very important. They agreed that everyone in society should respect different cultures, capabilities, educational backgrounds and belief systems. They talked about how everyone should take responsibility for improving social conditions. The findings from the Social Agenda Conference provided the foundation to take the next step towards creating a Social Agenda.

Context

Sharing Responsibility

"principles are: individual, family and community responsibility... we have shared responsibilities"

People at the Social Agenda Conference said that everyone including individuals, families, agencies, communities, the private sector and all levels of government share responsibility to improve people's well-being. So we aimed the recommendations at all levels.

Aboriginal Self-Government

As self-government evolves, Aboriginal governments will have authority over the decision-making and delivery of many programs that impact the well-being of people living in all communities. The Working Group tried to respect and understand the changing relationships between governments. Ideally, all governments and non-government organizations would work together in the future to improve social conditions in the Northwest Territories.

The Working Group kept self-government in mind. But our mandate was not to address matters of law-making authority that people ar discussing at self-government tables. It was to focus on what might improve social conditions. Aboriginal governments are at different stages of negotiation – some may continue for years. Northerners continue to face serious social problems. In the best interests of all people, we cannot wait until all self-government agreements are finished before trying to improve the system. We hope all governments use the Social Agenda as a framework and support the recommendations.

Please assume that in this document, when the term "governments" is used, we are referring to Aboriginal and all levels of public government.

"How does the Social Agenda fit into self-government negotiations?" (Community Meetings, March 2002)

"been studies done already, where are they?... the committee should look at past studies"

Focus of Recommendations

This report does not address specific social issues (e.g. addictions, mental health, residential school healing, crime, FAE/FAS, literacy, unemployment, homelessness etc). Society must deal with those issues and many more. But our recommendations are aimed at changing the overall system, within which governments and non-government service providers create and deliver programs and services, and make decisions about social policy. We think a few changes to the whole system will help everyone who works with people to deal with specific social problems. There are dozens of past and on-going plans and reports that focus on specific issues. They all support the over-all Social Agenda. But the draft Social Agenda recommendations are broad. We wanted to support, not repeat past or current ideas about how to deal with specific social problems.

"make the social agenda as important as the economic development and non-renewable agendas"

Balancing Agendas

Society must balance the attention given to economic issues with just as much focus on social issues! Everyone keeps talking about how the economy in the Northwest Territories will boom over the next few years. Some people assume that more jobs will solve all social problems. Experience tells us that this is not true. A booming economy brings new chances for people such as more jobs and training. With more money in their pockets, people may rely less upon income support programs and gain new skills. But rapid economic development can also lead to housing shortages, inflation, and a shortage of educated/trained workers, more addictions, family stress, a shortage of child-care and other issues. So society needs to prepare for economic development. A

"one of the elders told me what to talk about here is the oil and gas pipeline... she said to tell you: 'The liquor store had expanded, the bars had expanded and so did the graveyard when the first pipeline came through. We need to have something in place before the next pipeline comes in.'.... please don't make history repeat"

Social Agenda will be the base for a strong economy by ensuring people are healthy, well, educated and ready to take advantage of opportunities during boom times. But the economy will not always be strong. So no matter how the economy is doing, we should focus on social issues.

Communities and Regions are Different

The Working Group Members agreed with people's comments at Social Agenda Conference and at community meetings about accountability. We heard that leaders and policy makers should listen to the people and act upon what they hear. People at the conference said they want to move from a vision to concrete action. The Working Group knows that each community and region is unique. People at the Social Agenda Conference said that governments should support communities to put their own wellness plans into place. We listened. But just giving money to communities and saying "ok now go ahead and do it" is not enough. Funding based on need and careful planning and support will ensure communities succeed. The Social Agenda Working Group agreed to look at different approaches, even if they challenge the way things are done now. We want the Social Agenda to be helpful for all people, organizations and governments of the NWT.

"Needs and priorities will differ from one community to another" Working Together for Community Wellness; A Directions Document, 1995"

"ensure communities have resources in order to take ownership for its programs"

"let communities decide how much money is spent on community plans and decisions on where it goes and take responsibility for implementing plans"

"going into the communities for further dialogue... when is it going to stop?"

"if you are not going to take recommendations from this group, don't call us again, as you are wasting our time"

"people are frustrated it's another study"

Listening to People

While we worked on the draft Social Agenda, we wanted to hear from people again. But we remembered that people at the Social Agenda Conference said that communities were tired of consultations. Others said they thought consultations are a waste of time because the GNWT always does what they want no matter what the people said. So we asked all communities to decide if, how and when they would like to provide feedback on what we had done and to provide us with their ideas.

While not all communities chose to participate, all regions had at least one community that wanted a chance to give us feedback and input. We learned from this process that we tried to do too much with just one meeting in a community. The meetings were valuable introductions to the work we were doing, but we did not get answers to all of our questions. So we think it is important to keep talking to communities at every stage of the process.

Many community members had questions about what the Social Agenda was and how it was different from other initiatives such as the NWT Health and Social Services Action Plan or the Territorial Wellness Initiative. A lot of people wondered if the Social Agenda would be "another report that sits on the shelf." We understood why people have doubts because lots of reports do sit on the shelf.

We explained that the recommendations made by the Working Group would not speak to specific social problems but would be about how to change the overall system. Some people responded by suggesting they

would like more control at the community level, a one-stop shop for information about programs and how to fund them. Some of the front line workers who attended the meetings asked for multi-year funding. Still, some people talked at length about the specific social problems in their communities. This information told us what issues communities might think are important to measure over time. This will help us choose social indicators to measure.

What Is the Social Agenda?

"We want one-stop shopping for funding" (Community Meetings, March, 2002)

A Social Agenda should have a vision that everyone wants to achieve for society. We must address social issues together to achieve our goals, and to work toward social equality for everyone in the NWT. The draft Social Agenda report builds on the base set at the Social Agenda Conference. The Social Agenda will change and evolve over time. The Social Agenda is:

- A vision that describes the ideal society as though it already exists
- A mission statement that broadly describes what we want to work toward
- Sharing a commitment towards focusing on social issues
- A long-term social development plan to improve social conditions over time
- A way to measure the progress of social development over time
- Principles to guide decisions about policies and programs
- System-wide recommendations for action
- The beginning of an inventory of programs and services
- A recognition of all the good recommendations people have made about how to deal with specific social problems

We Want the Social Agenda To:

"We took this step because our social fabric is essential and must be balanced with resource development, employment and business initiatives." (Premier Kakfwi, Second Address to the People. January 10, 2002, 12:10 p.m.)

- Be the base for a successful economic agenda
- Balance the focus between economic and social development
- Ensure all northerners benefit from the opportunities economic development brings (e.g. employment, less reliance on income support, training and more disposable income)
- Broaden the definition of social issues to include everything that affects people's quality of life
- Acknowledge that the solutions can cut across agencies, departments, and governments

- Ensure that individuals, families, service providers, communities, governments and the private sector take responsibility to work together on social issues
- Recognize that rapid economic change can lead to increased social problems (e.g. inflation, housing shortages, increased rates of violence and more alcohol and drug abuse)
- Encourage joint planning for policies, programs and services as self-government evolves and the roles of Aboriginal and public governments change
- Make system-wide recommendations for communities, all governments, service providers and families and individuals that aim to improve people's well-being
- Provide a framework, through which all governments and service providers can view and deal with social issues

"... broad government initiatives such as the development of the Social Agenda also emphasize the importance of collaborative action" (NWT Health and Social Services Action Plan 2002-2005)

"Client feedback is an important gauge to evaluate our programs and important information to guide future development" (NWT Health and Social Services Action Plan 2002-2005)

"Development and implementation of the strategy on housing and support services must build upon current strengths and assets of the community and be streamlined through partnerships." (Yellowknife Community Plan to address Homelessness, Homelessness Coalition, Yellowknife, NT, July 1, 2000

How is the Social Agenda Linked to Other Work on Social Issues?

Issues are Linked

At first, the Social Agenda Working Group tried to show how all the past and present reports and plans that deal with social issues were linked. This was impossible given the tight time frame we had. Also, nobody monitored the recommendations in past plans and reports very well. The Working Group sees the Social Agenda as a framework and a set of actions to guide future efforts to improve social conditions in the Northwest Territories (NWT). We hope that all people working on social policies, programs and services view their work as fitting within the Social Agenda framework. Many leaders are saying society should focus more on social issues when they meet or when they talk to the people they represent. The Working Group hopes the Social Agenda encourages others to use partnership approaches whenever possible.

The Social Agenda Working Group reviewed many other projects that complement the Social Agenda. For example, the NWT Health and Social Services Action Plan talked about many ways for departments, government workers, service providers and the Health and Social Service Authorities to work together more effectively. The plan also mentions a client satisfaction survey. This is a chance to work together when the Working Group develops ways to measure the quality of life over time. We looked at the work being done in and outside governments to measure the impacts of economic development upon social well-being. Industry and governments are finally admitting how important it is to monitor the social impacts of economic and industrial development!

Work like the draft Strategy on Addictions, Mental Health and Family Violence recognizes that social issues are connected. The Territorial

Wellness Initiative is using a partnership approach to look at reducing the administrative burden for communities and agencies that access various Health Canada funds and supporting more integrated models of service delivery. Groups like the Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition raise awareness about how problems like the lack of affordable adequate housing are connected to other issues such as homelessness, poverty, health status, discrimination and nutrition. The NWT Council for the Status of Women provided us with countless reports that describe how issues like inequality between women and men tell us that discrimination continues to occur at all levels in society.

Working Together and Building Capacity

We heard from the Inuvik Interagency Committee and the Yellowknife Social Planning Coalition. Both groups work to better coordinate the delivery of programs by service providors in their communities. Projects, like the GNWT Volunteer Strategy promote and support the volunteer sector and encourage governments to work with volunteer organizations. Recognizing the role of volunteers and non-government organizations is more important than ever as governments transfer more responsibility for the delivery of programs to this sector.

Groups like the Aboriginal Summit that are made up of governments who represent people with different interests and cultures, see that working together towards a shared goal increases the chance of success. The Aboriginal Summit makes a strong case for capacity building and the need to work together. We also expect that the recently struck Special Joint Committee on Non Taxed-Based Community Affairs will raise awareness about capacity issues such as how some of our smallest communities struggle to gain access to or develop programs and services.

Working Together for Community Wellness: A Directions Document prepared in 1995 and the Community Action Fund tried to address many of the issues that some of the recommendations within this report speak to. People we talked to during community meetings were frustrated that plans developed under the Community Action Fund were never implemented because the funding was cut just when communities were ready to start putting their plans into place. These are just a few examples of groups and initiatives that are linked with the Social Agenda.

Our Work Supports Other Agendas

The Social Agenda fits within the overall agenda of the GNWT 14th Legislative Assembly. Two of the four key goals in *Towards a Better Tomorrow* support approaches that balance the focus between economic and social issues: "1. Healthy, educated individuals making responsible personal choices for themselves and their families" and "4. An effective balance between the development of our resources, social economic impacts, and preservation and protection of our natural environment."

"In light of the many challenges faced by communities in accessing health promotion and wellness funding programs, Health Canada and the three territories...are in the process of developing a Territorial Wellness Framework. The desired outcomes of this process will be a simpler administrative process for communities to access and report on funding. (Framework for Action: Early Childhood Development, 2001)

"It is recommended that the GNWT lead by example and engage in initiatives to actively facilitate successful partnerships with and within the voluntary sector" (NWT Volunteer Sector Development – The Emerging Third Sector, Consultation Report, 2001)

"find out what happened to community wellness initiatives that were put forth by the communities years ago... find these and action them... follow through on the work and efforts already done."

Common Ground, the NWT Economic Strategy, includes a chapter that talks about how people must be healthy and have more education and new skills before they can take advantage of economic opportunities.

Avoiding Duplication

Lots of work is underway to improve the quality of life in the NWT. Our intent is to support – not disrupt – that work. This report should not replace or stall other strategies or plans. It should create a framework for existing and future work to deal with social problems. One of the most important messages about linkages that we want to send is that people's well-being is connected to almost everything. Road access, how many people live in communities, along with social, environmental, economic, spiritual and cultural development all shape the quality of our lives.

"If our people are to take advantage of current and future economic opportunities, they must be healthy and have the necessary education and skills. We have however, significant and persistent health, education and employment problems that must be addressed." (Common Ground, NWT Economic Strategy 2000, Economic Strategy Panel)

"the community has the flexibility to personalize vision but the territorial vision must be the same... one mission statement and set of priorities to govern our work, policy, programs for all human services"

A Draft Social Agenda

Vision Statement

The NWT values people for their individual gifts, and supports them to make choices. People have a safe, healthy living environment, and a strong cultural and spiritual foundation that supports peoples' rights to determine their own futures in balance with their responsibility to society.

Mission Statement

To work towards the NWT being a place where all people are healthy and live in safe and respectful communities where they are supported and living to their fullest potential.

Guiding Principles for Addressing Social Issues

The following principles will help people if leaders, governments, non-government service providers and the private sector use them whenever they deal with social issues.

A. Roles and Responsibilities

- Individuals, communities, families, governments, service providers, organizations and the private sector all share responsibility to improve social conditions in the NWT
- To serve people better, governments, communities, service providers, non-government organizations, individuals, families and the private sector must work together to address social issues

B. Relationship to Economy

- A solid Social Agenda provides a foundation for economic development

C. Self-Government

- A commitment by all governments to address social issues should complement and support self-government without prejudicing the negotiation processes

D. Respect

- All people and communities have value and deserve respect, regardless of social or economic status, unique needs, goals, culture, ability, spiritual beliefs, capacity and priorities
- Workers providing all types of social programs and services should be respected and supported to do their work through chances for professional development and have reasonable working conditions

E. Building on and Sharing our Strengths

- Sharing and developing northern best practices will identify and build upon existing strengths of individuals, communities, programs and systems

F. Programs and Services Should Be:

- holistic and address people's physical, spiritual, mental and emotional needs
- person-centred, supporting individual choice and self-determination
- coordinated
- culturally sensitive and relevant
- flexible
- addressing the root causes of social problems
- reducing barriers to independence
- providing access to a range of supports to all age groups
- providing a balance of prevention and intervention
- coordinated but protect the privacy of individuals
- accessible
- responsive to family, community and other environmental contexts

G. Funding and Accountability Processes Should Support:

- community capacity building
- long-term planning and evaluation
- direct involvement of local people (e.g. ask for and include their input from the start and keep asking)
- better communication by directly reporting progress to the public

- working together across and within agencies and governments
- innovation, improvement in program quality and cost-effectiveness
- qualitative and quantitative results and outcomes
- leaders who are directly accountable to the people they represent

Recommendations

The following recommendations fall under six broad, but interconnected, headings. Under the Capacity Building and Accountability headings, there are sub-headings for some of the recommendations. We have included steps that say how to implement every recommendation. The text explains who is responsible for taking what action and when. The diagram on this page may explain how we have laid out the recommendations. All of the recommendations are interconnected, so it is important to review and implement them as a whole.

SOCIAL AGENDA AS A LENS

Using the Social Agenda as Policy Framework and Lens

The Social Agenda can be a lens to look through when making decisions about social policies, programs or services. This lens is like a policy framework to help define roles and responsibilities and to assign them to the appropriate level. We want decision-makers to strike a balance between economic and social issues by adequately funding social initiatives, programs and services. We also hope that the Social Agenda will encourage people to look at linkages between existing and new programs, services, policies etc., and to ensure new initiatives will build on, rather than duplicate, current work.

"Instead of having so many separate agendas, we should have a common agenda"

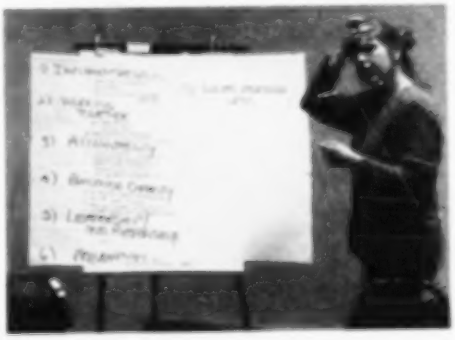
Recommendation 1:

The Working Group recommends that public and aboriginal governments as well as non-government organizations use the Social Agenda as a lens for all social policy and program decisions and actions.

How?

A. Governments, communities, non-government service providers and the private sector develop and use a checklist to filter programs, policies, action plans, strategies, initiatives, etc. through. For example, the checklist could include:

- Will there be any bias or prejudice against any people or group because of their language, race, culture, ethnicity, gender, age, ability or sexual orientation?
- Are the Social Agenda guiding principles followed?
- What will be the impact on people accessing services and on service providers?
- How will social conditions improve (e.g. does it help families to be nurturing, stable and supportive? Does it improve individual well-being? Does it increase community safety?)?
- Is there enough funding to ensure success?
- Does it agree with the *Human Rights Act* (once the law is passed)?



Working Together

"we have to be prepared to step back from what we own and work with others and recognize that we are not all the same... The Dene can sit down with the GNWT to plan and collectively establish priorities for social action. Working together is what our people want and jointly we can plan for where people want to go" – Bill Erasmus, National Chief, Dene Nation, addressing participants at the Social Agenda Conference

"...working together opens th doors for both Aboriginal governments and public government sectors to sit down and really develop an economic package alongside with a social agenda that would clearly meet the communities' specific needs and yet provide the resources and I guess the opportunities for all citizens of the NWT." – Charlie Furlong, Aklavik Chief, responding to the Premier's 2nd Address to the People

Governments, departments, agencies, service providers and the private sector need to work together. Everyone at the Social Agenda Conference heard this message. People repeated it during community meetings, our Working Group meetings, and during the Legislative Assembly sessions.

All levels of government and non-government organizations should work from the bottom up with community members, people accessing services, and with each other when they plan, make policy decisions or design programs and services. Cooperation at the start leads to better solutions. People who plan and design programs and services should base programs and services on need. This means working with people who deliver and use the programs and services. While decision-makers can't talk to everyone before they take action on anything, there are steps that we can all take to do a better job of working with each other.

We heard that government departments don't work together very well. Governments arrange programs and services in departments. This makes sure clear lines of accountability exist and that enough expertise is pooled in program areas that need high levels of specialization (e.g. health care).

But the average person is confused when they try to access programs and services from so many departments, programs and agencies. This type of system does not meet people's needs very well. Governments and organizations offer programs and services in rigid categories. This is generally referred to as "stove piping." Stove piping does not address social problems in a holistic way. People are not divided into departments. People have basic needs that cut across how governments and agencies organize themselves. For example, there are many services for seniors and children scattered across departments and agencies.

People needing services have a hard time finding out about, let alone accessing, services. Government departments and non-government agencies don't work together very well. People who deal with issues like income support, homelessness and family violence will tell you that. People need a coordinated response. Instead they often are sent from department to department or agency-to-agency without answers to their questions about how to get the help they need.

"All levels of leadership should be encouraged to work together, rather than in competition with each other." (Inuvik Interagency Committee Presentation, December 11, 2001)

"Establish forums for joint planning of interdepartmental initiatives" (NWT Health and Social Services Action Plan 2002-2005)

"...Aboriginal organizations and individuals are reeling from the stove-piped, program focused, agency by agency, bit by bit approach to capacity building. Something has to change" (A New Approach to Aboriginal Government Capacity Building: An Intergovernmental Forum Leadership Opportunity, Draft February, 2002)

People also said governments (e.g. Bands, Hamlet/Town Councils, Metis Locals, etc.) and organizations in communities do not work together very well. Instead, they compete with each other for scarce resources. Community infighting does not serve the best interest of people. Many barriers exist to community-based planning and cooperation. Some communities have plans collecting dust because they need more resources or different ways to access funding to put them into place. Other communities and regions want to develop plans but need some external help to get started. A few communities have interagency committees but they need support to get more organized or to expand their membership so they represent all community members and groups.

Truly working together is not easy. It flies in the face of how governments and non-government organizations structure themselves. Governments, communities, the private sector, service providers and people have to trust each other for partnerships to work. Past experiences have damaged people's trust, so everyone needs to work hard to repair relationships. Not working together is dangerous. If we work alone, we will harm people more than organizational structures. We cannot afford to continue working in isolation. No one government or organization or person has all the resources, expertise or power to change society. Forming successful partnerships will lead to better results. As a start, governments can review legislation, policies and practices that support working in isolation and support other ways that promote working together.

Recommendation 2:

Remove the structural barriers to working together and create or improve the ways that governments, communities, departments, agencies and service-providers work together.

How?

A. GNWT provide "one stop shop" funding for community and/or regional wellness plans and interagency committees made up of non-government and government people to ensure communities and/or regions are able to work together on social issues.

B. GNWT Cabinet approves one source for wellness funding for communities/regions/or interagency groups to work on wellness plans. Outside help should be available for wellness planning if communities say they need help. If no new money is available, it could come from existing government budgets using the following process:

- GNWT agrees to have a small amount of its total budget put into a single department, possibly the Executive or the Financial Management Board Secretariat (FMBS). It would give money to communities, regions or interagency committees.
- Participating departments can submit a joint Financial Management Board (FMB) submission by the by June 15, 2002, for the 2003/2004 fiscal year and for future years. If FMB approves the submission, the final business plans, which are due on August 15, 2002, would include the wellness funding.

"we have a wellness plan and need to get money to put something in place to implement"

"Government should abandon, once and for all, the idea that society's problems can be separated, categorized and ordered. The overall health and well-being of our people is intrinsically tied to the social, political and economic development of our communities. We can no longer afford to pay the price of dividing issues into manageable portfolios, programs and services." (Pauktuutit, brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, quoted in Working Together for Community Wellness: A Direction Document, 1995)

"Integration at all levels is the desired future of the health and social services system. However, since the determinants of social well-being are very broad and beyond the scope of any single department, horizontal integration of many programs and services across departmental lines is required." (NWT Health and Social Services Action Plan 2002-2005)

- Members of the current Legislative Assembly would look at the business plans and could approve the budget for fiscal year 2003/2004 and continue to do so for each fiscal year.
- Communities, regions or interagency/government committees that show a commitment to work together could directly access the new "wellness funding."

C. Wellness funding could require:

- annual financial audits
- program evaluation from time to time, using mutually agreed upon standards
- annual budget approval (without requiring annual proposals)
- that long-term plans are needed showing how people and groups will work together in the community or region.

"Commitment to implement wellness plans and help communities."

D. All governments make ongoing efforts to start and support ways within government and with other groups that build relationships and promote working together. Some examples of working together include the Intergovernmental Forum, the Aboriginal Summit, the Inuvik Interagency Committee, the Yellowknife Social Planning Coalition and the Social Agenda Working Group.

"Improved agency cooperation is the most critical element." (A New Approach to Aboriginal Government Capacity Building: An Intergovernmental Forum Leadership Opportunity, Draft February, 2002)

E. Review and possibly amend legislation and policies that stop government departments and community service providers from working together. Some examples include:

- GNWT Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) ensure that the confidentiality guidelines in sub-section 71(2)(i) of the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) allow child protection workers to share information with teachers following disclosures of abuse and/or child apprehensions to ensure adequate case management.
- GNWT HSS, Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and Justice review the Child Abuse Protocol to help teachers, social workers and police officers work together in the best interests of the child.
- If both the CFSA and the protocol already allow information to be shared, then we encourage HSS, ECE and Justice to ensure front-line workers use the protocol and the Act to work together in the best interests of the child.
- GNWT HSS and ECE and the Housing Corporation review the proposed amendments to section 6 of the *Child and Family Service Act*, and the *Social Assistance Act*'s and the *NWT Housing Corporation Act*'s age of eligibility for income support and subsidized housing. This review should make sure that 16-18 year olds do not fall through the cracks when trying to get help. This review should be completed in time to introduce any amendments in the fall, 2002 or the winter, 2003 sessions of the Legislative Assembly.

"We need to review the government's confidentiality policy as the current policy is not working in the best interests of healing our communities" (Social Agenda Conference, June 2001)

Capacity Building

Many issues relate to capacity. Here we discuss multi-year funding, small communities, and building northern capacity to deliver services and conduct research. People often talk about how they want to bring decision-making closer to the local level. Given this, and the context of self-government, it makes sense to build capacity now.

Multi-year Funding

The call for multi-year funding from service providers is not new. We heard it again at the Social Agenda Conference and within the Working Group. Many people we spoke with said that the lack of multi-year funding prevents them from planning ahead and working effectively.

People who administer programs funded by the federal government and the GNWT have to worry every year about whether governments will give them enough funding to keep their staff or run their programs. Some are unsure if they will receive funding at all from year to year. It's hard for non-government organizations to hire or keep highly skilled workers when they can't promise people that they will have jobs over the long-term.

Each year, people running programs have to write funding proposals to many different funding sources to get enough money to operate. If they don't spend all their money by the end of March, they have to return it. People talk about the "March money" trend when program administrators spend money in a hurry before the end of the fiscal year so they don't lose it. This does not support long-term planning, or promote efficiency. This wastes money near the end of the fiscal year, which could be used more effectively if it was carried over to the next year.

The time program administrators spend writing proposals, and government employees spend reviewing proposals, wastes time and financial resources. That time and money would be better spent on direct services or on long-term planning and prevention.

"Fostering mutually respectful and cooperative partnerships with Aboriginal governments... cooperate on capacity building at the community and regional levels." (Towards a Better Tomorrow, 14th Assembly of the Northwest Territories, March 31, 2000)

"we need programs that are not short term... we need multi-year and five-year contracts"

Recommendation 3:

Provide multi-year (3-5 years) funding to build local capacity and infrastructure, help with long-term planning, and reduce red tape beginning in the business planning cycles for 2003/2004.

How?

A. The GNWT departments, boards or authorities and the federal government provide one window **multi-year** funding for the areas they are responsible for. This should happen with those governments and organizations that have been funded annually, and where there is some degree of certainty that their services will be needed in the future (e.g. family violence shelters, NWT Literacy Council).

"multi-year funding is a must for programs to deliver adequate services"

We are not saying this type of funding be forced upon anyone. Some organizations may wish to continue to be funded each year the way they are now. Clearly funding arrangements would be looked at again as self-government is implemented.

B. Multi-year funding could require:

- annual financial audits and activity reports
- program evaluation from time to time using mutually agreed upon standards
- a three to five year budget (without requiring annual proposals)

"smaller communities need to have workers to work in health, justice, social areas, A&D... like CHRs but with a broader mandate to pull communities together... like an Interagency Coordinator"

There seems to be a core group of volunteers in each NWT community... They volunteer for boards, special events, to coach baseball teams, and to take elders to community feasts. Many other northerners help out at times of crisis and dire need. Still others are virtually invisible in their helping, giving and caring contributions to neighbours and the community in general (NWT Volunteer Sector Development: An Emerging Third Sector, 2001)

Small Communities

Many people are concerned about the lack of services in small communities and the lack of access to services in larger centres. Small communities cannot raise revenue through taxes, which adds to the problem. Very few people work in helping professions at the community level. There is not enough money to hire a full complement of workers in each community. Many workers don't want to work in small communities because they get no time off.

The size of the community does not always limit access to services. For example, some small communities have direct road access to larger centres that are less than half an hour away. In other communities, flying is the only way to access services not available at home. Some communities don't even have a resource worker to arrange access to services in larger centres. It's important to value the role that volunteers play in many small communities. They provide support that larger communities pay workers for. Many communities rely on an energetic pool of volunteers who are always there to help people. They make a priceless contribution to improving social conditions for their fellow community members.

While some small communities have many different programs, there are very few people delivering several services (e.g. Jean Marie River). Workers get burnt out and leave the community. Other small communities do not access much funding and have very few programs (e.g. Wrigley). Communities have different priorities. For example, during community meetings in the Sahtu, people said that building capacity to develop community justice programs was their priority. Other communities said their biggest concern was getting service providers to stay. There is no "one size fits all" solution. Decision-makers must ask people in communities to say what kind of workers or solutions will lead to better access to programs and services.

Recommendation 4:

All Members of the Legislative Assembly work together to establish and fund a minimum level of service(s) for all communities based on community specific needs assessments. These assessments should be completed within the time frame of the work of the Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs.

How?

A. Ask our smallest communities who or what they need to provide a minimum level of service by doing needs assessments

- The recently struck Special Joint Committee on Non-Tax-Based Community Affairs may help find solutions in consultation with small communities. For this reason, time-lines for the needs assessments should be coordinated with the work of the Special Joint Committee to ensure collaboration and avoid duplication.

B. The Working Group suggested examples – which could be funded through the next business planning cycle – such as, providing our smallest communities with one northern community/family resource worker who could report to all community governance structures to:

- help people access and provide information about funding, programs and services
- organize coordination among existing services within communities
- help develop a community plan in consultation with community members
- write proposals for funding to secure additional local services
- arrange access to programs and services available in larger centres

C. GNWT, Aboriginal and Community governance structures publicly recognize and support the valuable contributions made by all volunteers in their communities.

"a Wellness Coordinator to bring fragmented activities together by working in a co-ordinated focus... it's better use of money and will alleviate stress on individual workers, and provide better sharing of skills and professional supports"

"have a community interagency worker"

"hire a community coordinator so a paid position has the responsibility for following through... an active, qualified, committed person"

Building Research and Program Delivery Capacity in the NWT

Some program administrators within and outside governments express frustration at the lack of research completed in the NWT by northerners for northerners. Often national researchers will survey us and not even include information about the NWT in their final reports. The federal government does this a lot. Without data about people and their needs, and what works in the NWT, how are we sure that we develop and use culturally appropriate programs and services based on local best practices? The lack of northern research leads us to rely too much on programs developed in the South. If we produced more research in the NWT, it might increase access to funding if research showed where the greatest needs are. We could use northern research to improve northern services and reduce southern placements. We could encourage private sponsorship of research.

Over the years we've heard about how much money we spend on southern treatment services and how we need to bring people back to their home communities. But talk didn't lead to action. There are serious capacity issues. For instance, there is not enough money to

deliver some highly specialized programs and services in the NWT. Also, we may harm people who are stabilized and attached to southern treatment settings if we remove them from the place they are used to.

Efforts should focus on bringing recently placed people home from southern settings and building capacity to prevent southern placements from happening in the first place. Per capita funding from the federal government to deliver some services is also a barrier to building local capacity because it is based on population.

"Per capita funding doesn't work for small communities"

Maybe a myth exists about how much training or specialization people need to deliver certain services. For example, entry-level "attendants" make up most of the staff at many southern treatment facilities for children and youth. What if we started to spend the same amount of money in the NWT as we pay southern treatment centres? Couldn't the NWT build capacity to deliver programs and services for some people currently placed in the South? The Working Group believes it is possible. Every time we decide we don't have the capacity to do research or to provide a service, we reduce our capacity by spending money outside the NWT.

"support local resources"

Recommendation 5:

Governments, non-government organizations, academic institutions and the private sector should partner to build the NWT's capacity to conduct research and to deliver more programs in the NWT instead of relying on southern services. This work should begin now and continue over the long-term.

How?

A. Private industry could sponsor research carried out by governments and the non-government sector.

B. By July 2003, GNWT and federal governments partner to establish a Centre of Excellence for Social Research in the NWT linked with an academic institution (preferably in the NWT or alternatively at a southern academic institution that is interested in participating in northern research).

C. GNWT, Aboriginal governments and the non-government sector examine the possibility of building new, or expanding existing, services in the Northwest Territories to prevent people from being placed in southern settings in the future.

D. Within the next year, GNWT, Aboriginal Governments, communities and non-government sector partner to launch two or three NWT pilot programs for people recently placed in southern treatment placements.

E. GNWT departments, non-government organizations and the private sector could work closely with initiatives such as Maximizing Northern Employment to explore opportunities for collaboration in training and attracting specialized workers. Another example for potential collaboration in training is the YWCA's Basic Skills Tutor Trainer who trains staff to work with people with disabilities.

F. The federal government should immediately start to fund infrastructure, programs and projects on the assessment of need rather than on a per capita basis.

Accountability

The Social Agenda Working Group talked about accountability at a number of levels:

- developing and implementing a social indicator approach
- monitoring the implementation of the social agenda
- doing a better job of tracking and communicating recommendations, and
- ensuring that policies, legislation and standards are relevant and designed to increase communication and accountability

Social Indicators

We looked at social development plans from around the world. Most plans used broad social indicators to measure the quality of life over time. Usually plans use statistics to do this. Social indicators can help us recognize social problems earlier, set priorities, and show us if we are moving in the direction that we want to go. Examples of indicators are rates of family violence, literacy, how many people participate in at least one volunteer activity a week, or the percentage of people who are satisfied with their quality of life. Indicators help us see trends developing and help us to talk about what is going well and what needs improvement.

For example, in the NWT, an increase in jobs and wages may not lead to a healthier population. Talking about this issue may help us prevent social problems. It can help us strengthen society so we can take advantage of economic opportunities and cope with economic decline. Regular program evaluation would complement a broad system of indicators. We think that program evaluation should go beyond reporting on how resources are used and look at whether programs and services are working over time.

Goals are general statements that say what you want to achieve. Setting broad goals is an important part of any measurement system. Measuring social indicators against goals helps to paint a clear picture of where we want to go and how we will tell if we are getting there. Measurement systems increase public accountability, create healthy debates between everyone involved in working on social issues, and allow for long-term analysis to see if our quality of life improves over time.

We want to ensure that measurement indicators are valid, culturally relevant and reflect what communities say is important to measure. The Working Group will finish developing a set of indicators, which we will release by the summer of 2002. This will give us time to include the

"we need transparency and accountability at all levels"

It is good to see a longer term (twenty) years for indicators. We need that to make this work. We have been playing catch up for so long and we need a longer term to diminish the ills of society." (Community Meetings, March 2002)

"If this information is tracked over time and benchmarked, it would provide useful information to the government for planning and programming. Collecting data is not an insurmountable task today. Numerous sources are accessible." (Community Meetings, March 2002)

"We need indicators determined by community people" (Community Meetings, March 2002)

2000 cycle of Census data instead of 1996 data, and allow time to set targets, which will help us measure progress in the short term. Targets tell us how we are doing along the way before our goals are met. For example, if the rate of family violence was an indicator, we could set a target like "reduce the rate of family violence by 20% by 2005." Then we would measure the indicator to see if we met the target.

The Working Group strongly believes that governments must create an arms length Social Agenda Implementation Council with members from different governments and organizations. The Council could ensure that indicators made sense over the long-term and meet reports on targets. Somebody must measure results over the long-term.

"there should be regular reporting of social agenda items"

Monitoring Implementation of the Social Agenda

When we talked about measurement, we discussed how the Social Agenda has to last longer than the term of one government. The Social Agenda can't become another report that sits on the shelf! The Social Agenda Implementation Council could track the recommendations to make sure they are implemented.

The group would monitor indicators and the implementation of the Social Agenda. It would report regularly to all governments and the public. Also, the Council could regularly update the inventory of programs and services, which the Working Group prepared as a separate document. Assigning this responsibility to the Social Agenda Implementation Council would make sure the job gets done. Groups that are funded to monitor economic development and the impact of industrial development upon the environment have set a precedent. We hope that the Social Agenda gets the same amount of attention.

Recommendation 6:

Public and Aboriginal governments should approve the social indicator approach to measure social conditions over time.

How?

A. The Social Agenda Working Group will select indicators in time for the 2003-2004 business plan. We will group the indicators under broad goals, which aim to improve social conditions.

- **Goal 1:** People are Healthy, Have Good Well-being and are Able to Participate
  - -We will add indicators to measure social conditions at the individual level
- **Goal 2**: Families are Nurturing, Stable and Supportive
  - -We will add indicators to measure social conditions at the family level

- **Goal 3:** Communities are Safe, Caring and Supportive Environments

  -We will add indicators to measure social conditions at the com munity level

- **Goal 4:** Resources are Available to Achieve Well-Being

  -We will add indicators to measure social conditions about resources and if people think there are enough resources

B. Establish a Social Agenda Implementation Council by fall, 2002, which could report to the Intergovernmental Forum (IGF). The Council should be cost shared by governments. It should include members representing Aboriginal and public governments and non-government service providers to:

- monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report and report findings back to governments and the public
- refine and monitor the social indicators and report back to people biannually on progress made towards achieving set targets
- Regularly update the program and service inventory
- Ensure it is widely available in easily accessible forms (e.g. post on the GNWT web-site and print hard copies).

C. We want the IGF to take responsibility for the Social Agenda because it is a group with representation from Aboriginal and public governments. The IGF has a mandate to work on devolution and economic development, both of which require capacity and a skilled work force. Social development will build capacity and ensure people are ready for job opportunities. This is key for people in the NWT to benefit from economic development. If the IGF does not agree to oversee the Social Agenda, we believe the Implementation Council must be established using GNWT legislation. Taking the following steps will increase the chances that the Social Agenda survives the term of the 14th Assembly.

- Prepare a Legislative Proposal for the June session of the Legislative Assembly, and prepare a bill for introduction in fall of 2002.
- The legislation would state the purpose and mandate of the Council, endorse the use of the indicator system, broadly describe multi-sector membership and say when the Council would report back to the Legislative Assembly, other governments and the public.

D. No matter who creates the Social Agenda Implementation Council, they must provide it with enough staff to do its job, including at minimum:

- one person with statistical and analytical expertise
- a person with knowledge and experience in dealing with social programs policies
- an administrative assistant

"we need a group to revisit and revise recommendations from this conference and we recommend a 'watch dog' committee made of people from this conference to ensure follow-up from the Social Agenda Committee"

"that group needs to be the Senate body from the north to meet on a regular basis... to assess recommendations, what's working and what's not... there needs to be a political will to get this going"

"Building this capacity will require the joint efforts of Aboriginal, territorial and federal governments... it is an agreed upon agenda item." (A New Approach to Aboriginal Government Capacity Building: An Intergovernmental Forum Leadership Opportunity, Draft February, 2002)

E. The Social Agenda Working Group should continue to exist until the IGF or the GNWT form the Implementation Council so nobody forgets about the Social Agenda.

F. Program administrators within and outside governments should focus more on evaluating program quality over the long-term and not just on how money is spent from year to year. For example, governments could contract with non-government organizations to provide training in a variety of program evaluation models. We can draw upon program evaluation expertise within government as well.

"dust off recommendations from meetings that did this already... they developed recommendations that haven't been implemented"

"suggest that the recommendations of past consultations be reviewed and assessed." (Inuvik Interagency Committee Presentation, December 11, 2001)

Keep the doors open; communicate often; keep community members well informed; encourage residents to attend meetings; make information as accessible as possible." (Social Agenda Community Meetings, March 2002)

Implementing, Assessing, Tracking and Communicating Recommendations

There are reports that speak to almost all social issues that affect the quality of life. But it is hard to know if these recommendations have been implemented, or if they have led to improvements. Not all recommendations have been implemented and very few recommendations have been tracked over time. Reports were hard to find because they were scattered among governments, departments and agencies. No wonder some reports repeated the recommendations in other documents. We prepared a collection of existing and past recommendations to help all governments and agencies review other work when they plan how to address specific issues. The document is called *NWT Recommendations on Social Issues 1988-2002*. We hope you find it useful.

Recommendation 7:

All governments and non-government agencies should make sure that the recommendations contained in all their reports or plans are implemented, assessed, monitored, and reported back to the public.

How?

A. From now on, to avoid duplication and increase communication and accountability, governments and non-government agencies should review, consider, and where possible, implement existing recommendations before additional strategies, action plans, etc., are created in isolation of previous good work.

- All future action plans and strategies should talk about how they fit with other work
- Examine whether other plans are already underway or finished that address the same issue to avoid duplication and increase cooperation
- Create a standard checklist to track the degree of implementation

- Evaluate all recommendations at regular time periods to tell whether they lead to improvement over time
- Communicate the results widely within and across governments, organizations and to the general public
- Use different communication tools to promote their own work, to raise awareness of existing work and to achieve a complete feed back loop
- Require the Social Agenda Implementation Council to monitor and report back to governments and the public on recommendations contained in this report

B. Ask the Implementation Council to collect and make an easy to access library available by summer 2003. The library would include information from past and current social policies, standards, research, information, action plans, studies, strategies and reports.

Policies, Legislation and Standards

Many policies, legislation and standards tell service providers how to deliver programs. The public and service providers should know about and understand all policies, legislation and standards. Many people at the Social Agenda Conference and people at the community meetings said they did not know what standards were in place, let alone what they said. If people are aware of what all the rules are, they will understand what their rights are. Information is powerful. Wading through "red tape" is a barrier for people trying to meet their needs. Many people said actions like clawing back income support payments were stigmatizing and punitive. It's too bad that some policies and legislation support these actions.

Other people we talked with wondered why people responded to questions with complicated answers. Their questions were about how to meet their basic needs, like having a roof over their heads or enough money to feed their children. Sometimes government workers quoted policies or legislation to provide information. This didn't help. Sometimes people in need were passed back and forth between departments. Governments need to clearly communicate with people about what policies, standards and legislation are in place and what they mean. This would reduce the amount of red tape people have to wade through. The Working Group strongly believes that the GNWT must pass the proposed *Human Rights Act* as soon as possible. We hope it includes a charter of social rights to protect people from having rules applied unfairly.

Sometimes people make inaccurate comments about policies or legislation. For example, during the Social Agenda Conference many people said the *Education Act* and the *Child and Family Services Act* are barriers to traditional culture or do not allow for community input. Both *Acts* do promote local decision-making and traditional culture. But

"Clients do not receive any information as to their rights and benefits. Clients are not informed that copies of the Social Assistance Act and the Policy are available." (Falling Through the Cracks: A Single Mother's Personal Account of Accessing GNWT Social Program: Prepared By: Aimee L. Clark, February, 2002.)

"Clawbacks are unacceptable." (Social Agenda Community Meetings, March 2002)

"endorse human principles in all policies, regulations and acts"

governments, communities and workers do not always implement or share information about those sections.

Recommendation 8:

All governments and non-government agencies should establish policies or legislation and minimum standards for programs and services. They should also review existing policies, legislation and standards to:

- ***protect the public***
- ***guide service providers***
- ***ensure people have access to care no matter where they live***
- ***ensure people receive an adequate and safe level of care***

"policies must also be flexible enough to accommodate common sense"

"government should ask clients and front line workers to sit down with government leaders to review directives, policies and legislation for relevancy"

"reform policy and regulations to make them user-friendly and realistic and programs to work together in a holistic manner"

How?

A. Use the following criteria for existing and new policies, legislation and standards:

- review them annually and update if necessary
- base them on personal or community need (e.g. community plans or community-based needs assessments)
- develop them in cooperation
- communicate them to everyone
- apply them in the same way to make sure they are fair
- ask if they are relevant to the cultures and context of the NWT
- make sure the capacity exists to meet standards
- ensure enough funding is provided to support the standards
- ask if they are necessary to ensure a minimum level of service
- ask if they will improve social well-being
- make sure they reduce and not increase stove-piping
- ensure they do not punish or discriminate against people
- make sure they are easy to understand – i.e. written in plain language

B. Governments and non-government agencies should prepare plain language summaries of legislation, policies and standards. They should prepare commonly asked questions and answers, and give them to all service providers and tell the public how to access this information. This work should begin now and always continue.

Leadership and Individual Responsibility

People at the Social Agenda Conference said that every person must work on social problems. Public and Aboriginal governments should work together and support service providers. But they won't make communities, families or individuals well by themselves. Individuals can make healthy choices and support their families, neighbours, communities and society. Everyone has a part to play.

Most people have bad habits, and leaders are no exception. But when they take a stand against issues like family violence or sexual abuse, leaders support service providers. People are afraid when people with power deny problems exist in communities.

People should expand their definition of "leader." We can all be leaders or role models in our families and communities to some degree. The Working Group realizes that improving social conditions requires strong leadership. We also recognize that being a leader is challenging. People at the Social Agenda Conference and in communities said that leaders should not abuse their power and leaders should be part of the solution, not part of the problem. If we want our leaders to be a voice for social issues and social role models along with the many other responsibilities they have, we need to support them. We place many people into leadership positions with huge responsibilities without the tools or support they need to do a good job.

"take individual responsibility for your own health and well-being... as leaders, be true role models"

"as leaders, caregivers, front line workers and community members, we are role models... we need to start modelling positive behaviour that will make others change their lives"

"take responsibility for your own wellness, keeping in mind removing barriers to participation"

Recommendation 9:

Every person, including leaders, should make a personal commitment to contribute to improving social conditions in the NWT. We should work together to better support our leaders.

How?

A. Some ideas for individuals are:

- make healthy choices about your lifestyle (e.g. stop drinking, smoking, or any type of abusive behaviour, start eating healthy foods, exercise regularly or seek help to begin your personal healing process)
- help the next generation by doing positive activities with your children or with other children (e.g. read to your child three times a week, attend meetings of your local school board and express your concerns, teach your children about your traditional culture and values, spend more time with your family; become a *Big Buddy* for a child; teach your children about what they can learn from your elders)

- participate in an activity that you think will help your community (e.g. become a volunteer, donate some meat to a community freezer, attend community meetings when issues will be discussed that may affect you, your family and your community, join a group that meets regularly to do something you enjoy with other community members)
- become an advocate and always vote so you have a say about how public and Aboriginal governments deal with social issues (e.g. voice your concerns at every level using every opportunity you see, use your courage to speak out about social issues in your community)
- speak out about sexual abuse or family violence in your community; break the silence

"we need to break silence and speak about it... say that behaviour is not tolerable... 'say no'... not judging but identifying it as unacceptable and assisting in changing behaviour"

"leaders have to be honest and acknowledge what they are struggling with and ask for help"

"We need to educate Band leaders and members about their roles and responsibilities."

B. Some ideas for leaders at all levels and their supporters are:

- speak up publicly and become role models for a collective and on-going focus on the importance of social issues and the well-being of society
- leaders with personal issues who have the courage to begin their own healing journey need to be supported in a non-judgmental way by the people they represent
- make use of techniques such as mentoring and shadowing in addition to leadership training to better prepare leaders for their responsibilities
- expand volunteer recognition and encourage community plans
- pool leadership training resources at the territorial, departmental, regional and community level to increase access to training opportunities for anyone in a leadership position or for people who want to be leaders
- together we need to broaden our understanding of the definition of leadership to include all elected officials to public or Aboriginal governments, board members, executive directors, elders, citizen leaders, volunteers, parents, clergy and leaders of youth organizations etc.
- set up an annual award recognizing people whose actions further the social agenda vision

Prevention

We know that spending money on programs for very young children and supporting women to not drink before or when they become pregnant leads to a healthier society and long-term savings. Helping children as soon as we know they have problems has a life-long benefit. As problems get worse, they are harder and more expensive to deal with. This makes a good case for prevention and early intervention. Recent government spending in early childhood development, literacy, and health promotion is a good sign. All governments, non-government agencies and the private sector should invest in prevention. The Working Group knows this is not easy when money is in short supply. However, many types of prevention (e.g. public awareness campaigns, reading to children, and parent information kits) are not expensive and they pay off in the long-term.

A commitment to investing in prevention will sustain a northern workforce over the long-term, and reduce dependency on many social programs. The system must *also* continue to care for people who already have serious social problems while investing in prevention. Just moving funding from intervention to prevention will not solve the problem. That would punish people who have social problems now. Reducing the cost of the social safety net will take time. Everyone should be patient and realize that a dual period of spending on prevention and intervention will eventually pay off.

Recommendation 10:

All levels of government, service providers, non-government organizations, communities, the private sector, families and individuals should support approaches that emphasize prevention.

How?

A. Individuals and families can make healthy choices about their lifestyles that lead to long-term cost savings and less dependency on expensive systems such as acute health care

B. All governments, non-government organizations and the private sector can support prevention initiatives (e.g. early childhood development, support women in their healing process before they become pregnant) that try to prevent problems before they occur

C. Public and private funders should investment more towards prevention and early intervention, but not at the expense of treating people with existing social problems

D. Communities can make prevention a key component in their wellness plans

"Prevention is an integral part of healing. The support of early childhood programs is critical as it can decrease or even avoid the need for healing. A child's experience in the first five years of life will have a critical impact on his or her success in the future." (Working Together for Community Wellness: A Directions Document, 1995)

"focus on changing work done at the community level by increasing the emphasis on prevention related activities...focus prevention activities on the whole family"

E. Non-government organizations can encourage governments and the private sector to fund prevention programs and offer to partner with governments, communities and the private sector to develop and implement prevention programs

F. All people can raise awareness about the importance of prevention

Implementation

- The Working Group does not want the Social Agenda report to be another document that sits on the shelf. We believe that while these recommendations have a price tag, you are not looking at an expensive package. The Social Agenda is achievable. It represents a valuable investment in people that balances the current investments into the economy. This will pay off in the long-term. We want action now.

- The Social Agenda must have a long life. We believe a group with representatives from inside and outside governments should monitor the implementation of the recommendations and measure social conditions over the long-term. The group could also review findings, and work together with people, within and outside government, to ensure we move in the right direction.

- We do not see this as another layer of bureaucracy, but as the only independent, arms-length body assigned to monitor social conditions. Environmental monitoring bodies and economic advisory councils have set a precedent. Why can't we have a Social Agenda Implementation council? The environment and the economy are important, and so is the well-being of people in society.

- We aim many of the recommendations at the GNWT only because they currently have law-making authority over most social programs and services. We believe the recommendations are good for people regardless of what government has authority.

- For this reason, we challenge all Members of the 14th Assembly, the 15th Assembly, the federal government, Aboriginal self-governments and community governments to endorse the implementation of the Social Agenda. With sufficient political will there is implementation. Working in partnership means a better chance of success. Lasting change is impossible when the good work of one government is swept away after the next election.

- We challenge all people and organizations to do their part to create a better society. Use the political power you have as voters to make sure all your governments take action!

"How does this survive the next government? It shouldn't matter who gets elected to carry this forward. We don't want to go backward in the future when new people are elected" (Community Meetings, March, 2002)

"long-term plan... recognize that this is a lifetime journey and ongoing... it doesn't matter about government change and their four year agenda, but can keep it going" add in the implementation portion at the end"

"It is unacceptable to turn a blind eye to disparities in our communities. A common thread that binds us all is working together. It is the only way to achieve positive change." (Hay River South, MLA Jane Groenewegen, welcoming participants Social Agenda Conference, June 2001).

Appendices

Appendix I: What Did the Social Agenda Working Group Do?

- We started with what people had said at the Social Agenda Conference and decided to always use it as our reference point. We agreed with people at the conference that everyone shares responsibility to work on social issues.
- We used a consensus-based approach and an approved Terms of Reference. We recognized that working together and trusting each other is the key to moving forward. In October we met for the first time and we continued to meet every month. Over time and through hard work, our thinking became collective even though we represented diverse sectors.
- We decided to review past and current recommendations about social issues and look at what programs and services were offered. It made sense to look at what programs and services existed to see if there were obvious gaps and what recommendations had already been made to avoid duplication.
- We realized there was no single document that described what programs and services were available in each community and within each government department. So we began to prepare a comprehensive program and service inventory, which has been a challenge. It provides a good start for what we hope will be a living document.
- We reviewed dozens of documents and collected hundreds of recommendations. We developed a vision and mission statement and agreed upon principles to guide future actions. We brainstormed and came up with 347 actions under 36 goals. Then we did a cross-check with past recommendations and we realized how much good work had already been done in making recommendations about so many issues. In some cases there was repetition of recommendations in reports.
- We did not want to duplicate the huge amount of existing work but we decided it was worthwhile to draw attention to the recommendations that were already made.
- We found it hard to tell whether recommendations had been implemented, or if they had led to the desired outcome. We decided someone should do a better job in the future to track the implementation of recommendations over time and communicate the status of implementation back to the public.
- We also agreed governments and non-government organizations needed to pay more attention to whether or not actions positively impact the quality of life in our society. Regular program evaluation would make it easier to decide whether or not programs and services are working.

- The Working Group decided that we should spend some time looking at the overall system. As we began to explore this, it became clear that some system-wide changes could help us deal with all social issues.
- We talked about what works and the barriers to getting better results, no matter what social issue people addressed.
- We talked about how much time and effort social advocates within government and non- government organizations spend trying to get information from each other and from different government departments – often with little success. Unfortunately, the best interest of people accessing services probably gets lost in the midst of turf protection.
- We also shared examples of how much success had occurred when partnership approaches had been used. We had a lot of discussion about how we could work together better to reduce stove-piping within and across governments, communities and professions.
- People in Hay River expressed frustration about how communities or regions were not supported to develop or implement their own plans. So we began to talk about how to provide better support to people in communities and regions so they could develop and implement their own wellness plans according to their own priorities.
- People at the Social Agenda Conference spoke about the need for accountability. So we set out to develop a broad accountability framework that will use indicators to measure the overall well-being of people over the short and long-term. We drafted broad goals under which we will group the indicators.
- We met with many people to hear their expertise and we provided many briefings about what we are doing. We prepared an insert to update the public on our progress in December 2001. We continued to gather input and to share information about our work.
- In February and March of 2002 we held community meetings to get feedback on the work to date and to ask for people's input into the work ahead. Not all communities asked for a meeting but every region had at least one community meeting. The meetings were a good introduction to the process of developing a Social Agenda.
- Finally, we put the pieces together to present the Social Agenda framework for public and Aboriginal governments to review. This document reflects our collective effort towards this goal.

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